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ABSTRACT

According to a recent study a rape occurs every 7 minutes and 60% of those rapes happen on dates. This study examined the impact of assault outcomes (rape, avoidance) and victim's power strategy (direct/bilateral, indirect/unilateral) on male and female evaluations of a date rape situation. College students (N=121) listened to a taped dialogue and answered a questionnaire which assessed their evaluation of the situation. The audiotape presented a re-enactment of a sexual assault incident, supposedly based on information given by both the assailant and the victim. Introductory remarks set the scene, indicated that the couple had been dating awhile, and indicated whether the rape occurred. In the direct/bilateral condition, the female argues with the male explaining why she is not ready to have sex. In the indirect/unilateral tape, the female objects but remains essentially passive. At the end of the tape, the male either leaves indignantly (rape avoidance) or rapes the female (rape outcome). As predicted rape elicited more negative evaluations than avoidance and direct/bilateral strategies were evaluated more positively than indirect/unilateral strategies. In addition, the two types of strategies were differentiated when they were successful, but they were not differentiated when they were unsuccessful. Empathy affected attributions of responsibility. (ABL)

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Evaluations of a Date Rape Situation: Effects of Victim's Power Strategy, Rape Outcome, and Sex of Subject

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Running head: EVALUATIONS OF DATE RAPE

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of assault outcome (rape, avoidance) and victim's power strategy (direct/bilateral, indirect/unilateral) on male and female evaluations of a date rape situation. Subjects listened to a taped dialogue and answered a questionnaire which assessed their evaluation of the situation. As predicted, rape elicited more negative evaluations than avoidance and direct/bilateral strategies were evaluated more positively than indirect/unilateral strategies. In addition, the two types of strategies were differentiated when they were successful, but they were not differentiated when they were unsuccessful. Empathy affected attributions of responsibility. Implications for date rape situations are discussed.

Evaluations of a Date Rape Situation: Effects of Victim's Power Strategy, Rape Outcome, and Sex of Subject

According to a recent study, a rape occurs every seven minutes and, of those rapes, 60% happen on dates (Seligmann, Huck, Joseph, Namuth, Prout, Robinson, & McDaniel, 1984). However, while date rape is common, observers do not usually consider it "real" rape (Check & Malamuth, 1983). Female victims of date rape are often perceived as legitimate victims (Klemmack & Klemmack, 1976) and are held responsible for their victimization.

While observers hold these women responsible for their victimization, the conditions underlying these attributions are unclear. The just world hypothesis (Lerner & Miller, 1978) has argued that individuals need to believe they live in a world where people get what they deserve and deserve what they get. Thus, a rape victim's derogation occurs because the observer maintains this belief in a just world and wants to make the victim look as though she deserved to be raped. On the other hand, research has also indicated that empathy, or identification with the victim, reduces victim derogation (Deitz, Blackwell, Daley, & Bentley, 1982). Therefore, people who can empathize with a rape victim will be less likely to derogate her than people who cannot empathize with her. While both these theories attempt to explain observers' derogation of a victim, the effect of a victim's behavior in resisting her assailant has not been extensively explored.

Women receive conflicting messages regarding the method of resistance they should use. On one hand, they are encouraged to actively resist an assault, but on the other hand they are encouraged to use more subtle methods of resistance. Bart (1981) has shown that in some circumstances resisting an assault is an effective strategy for avoiding rape. Unfortunately, there is little research exploring attributions as a function of the victim's method of resistance.

Falbo and Peplau (1980) have argued that men and women use different kinds of power strategies in intimate relationships. Their research has shown that women tend to use indirect/unilateral power strategies, such as withdrawing from the situation or crying. These indirect/unilateral power strategies avoid direct confrontation with and require no response from the target of influence. On the other hand, men tend to use direct/bilateral power strategies, such as talking and bargaining, which involve direct confrontation with and require some response from the target. In addition, Falbo and Peplau (1980) report that both men and women believe (1) that indirect/unilateral power strategies as less effective than direct/bilateral strategies and (2) that women using indirect/unilateral strategies do not expect compliance.

More recent studies have also found that indirect/unilateral power strategies, which are more often used by women, have been rated less powerful and effective than direct/bilateral power strategies (Bullock & DeLamarter, 1989; DeLamarter & Hunt, 1990). Because indirect/unilateral power strategies are not viewed as highly as direct/bilateral power strategies, using indirect/unilateral strategies in a date rape

situation may increase ratings of the female victim's responsibility for her assault. However, while the use of direct/bilateral strategies may seem to empower women, a female victim could be negatively evaluated for engaging in gender inappropriate strategies. In addition, a victim's power strategy may affect an observer's empathy for the victim and, therefore, influence attributions. This relationship has not been investigated and is unclear.

To further complicate the issue, there is the question of outcome. If either type of strategy is unsuccessful an rape occurs, the victim's behavior may be derogated. In hindsight, the victim should have changed her behavior in order to avoid the rape (Janoff-Bulman, Timko, & Carli, 1985). Thus, both kind of strategies would be derogated for being unsuccessful. However, if the strategy is successful and rape is avoided, ratings may be influenced by the victim's power strategy. This differentiation between the two different types of power strategies could go in either direction described above. First, a victim who uses direct/bilateral strategies while attempting to resist an assailant may be viewed more positively than a victim who attempts to resist using indirect/unilateral strategies because direct/bilateral strategies are generally viewed more positively than indirect/unilateral strategies. On the other hand, a victim's use of direct/bilateral power strategies may be devalued more than indirect/unilateral power strategies because direct/bilateral strategies are gender inappropriate strategies, while indirect/unilateral strategies are gender appropriate.

The present research was conducted to explore all these issues. In addition,

this research attempted to illuminate some of the dynamics that underlie the attribution of responsibility and the evaluation of a female victim in a date rape situation.

Method

Subjects and Design

One hundred twenty-one introductory psychology students participated in this 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design manipulating sex of subject, power strategy of the female victim (direct/bilateral, indirect/unilateral), and rape outcome (rape, rape avoidance). Subjects received extra credit for their participation.

Procedure

The subjects listened to an audio-taped reenactment of a sexual assault incident, supposedly based on information given by both the assailant and the victim. Introductory remarks set the scene, indicated that the couple had been dating a while, and indicated whether rape occurred. In the dialogue, the couple express mutual affection and then the male attempts to initiate sex. In the direct/bilateral condition, the female argues with the male explaining why she is not ready to have sex. In the indirect/unilateral tape, the female objects but remains essentially passive. At the end of the tape, the male either leaves indignantly (rape avoidance) or rapes the female (rape outcome).

Following the tape, subjects completed a questionnaire which included measures of empathy to each character on the tape (11 point scales), evaluations of how responsible each character was for the event's occurrence (7 point scales), and a

series of measures to rate the victim's power strategy (7 point scales). After the subjects completed the questionnaire, they were fully debriefed about the experiment and given information about date rape and services available to victims.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation checks

All the manipulation checks indicated the success of the experimental manipulations. All of the incidents were rated equally likely (all F's < 1.1). Rape was rated more serious (M = 5.97) than avoidance (M = 4.86), F (1,113) = 21.44, p < .001. In addition, direct/bilateral strategies were rated a clearer form of communication (M = 6.05) than indirect/unilateral strategies (M = 4.51), F = 34.39, p < .001.

Power Strategy Main Effects

The overall worth assigned to direct/bilateral strategies is seen in the measures assessing power strategies. Direct/bilateral power strategies were consistently rated more positively than indirect/unilateral power strategies. Subjects indicated that direct/bilateral strategies were more powerful (direct/bilateral M = 3.30, indirect/unilateral M = 2.57), F (1,113) = 8.20, p < .01; more competent (direct/bilateral M = 3.90, indirect/unilateral M = 3.23), F (1,113) = 7.27, p < .01; more straightforward (direct/bilateral M = 6.07, indirect/unilateral M = 5.11), F (1,113) = 16.30, p < .001; and more pushy (direct/bilateral M = 3.88, indirect/unilateral M = 2.52), F (1,113) = 25.26, p < .001 than indirect/unilateral strategies. Of course, pushiness is not always viewed positively, however, when trying to a avoid rape, it

should be. Surprisingly, direct/bilateral strategies were not rated more effective than indirect/unilateral strategies. But, overall, these findings are consistent with the previous research in which direct/bilateral strategies were rated more positively than indirect/unilateral strategies.

Outcome Main Effects

Similarly, the victim's behavior was seen as more powerful (avoid $\underline{M}$ = 3.36, rape $\underline{M}$ = 2.50), $\underline{F}$ (1,113) = 12.06, $\underline{p} < .001$; more competent (avoid $\underline{M}$ = 3.97, rape $\underline{M}$ = 3.15), $\underline{F}$ (1,113) = 11.36, $\underline{p} < .01$; and more effective (avoid $\underline{M}$ = 3.28, rape $\underline{M}$ = 1.82), $\underline{F}$ (1,113) = 29.53, $\underline{p} < .001$, when rape was avoided. These results could be interpreted through just world reasoning (i.e., the rape victim was derogated in order to make her look as though she deserved to be raped), but it is more likely that subjects rated the victim's power strategy more positively when she avoided rape because her strategy had been successful.

Power Strategy X Outcome Interactions

Three power strategy by rape outcome interactions were also obtained. In general, power strategies were rated equally when rape occurred and were differentiated when rape was avoided. For example, this kind of interaction occurred for the measure of powerfulness. When rape occurred, both direct/bilateral ($\underline{M}$ =

Insert Figure 1 about here

2.43) and indirect/unilateral strategies (M = 2.57) were rated similarly. But, when rape was avoided, direct/bilateral strategies (M = 4.17) were rated more powerful than indirect/unilateral strategies (M = 2.58), F (1,113) = 11.50, p < .01. Similar interactions occurred on the measures of competence (rape, direct/bilateral M = 3.20,

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Insert Figures 2 and 3 about here

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indirect/unilateral M = 3.10; rape avoidance, direct/bilateral M = 4.60, indirect/unilateral M = 3.35), F (1,113) = 5.25, p < .05 and straightforwardness (rape, direct/bilateral M = 5.83, indirect/unilateral M = 5.43; rape avoidance, direct/bilateral M = 6.30, indirect/unilateral M = 4.81), F (1,113) = 5.48, p < .05.

These findings confirm the prediction. Differentiation between the strategies was expected when the strategies were successful and differentiation was not expected when the strategies were unsuccessful. These findings are probably due to hindsight bias. When told the female victim was raped, the subjects derogated her behavior because it resulted in rape and the victim would have had to change that behavior in order to avoid the rape. Therefore, the behavior, regardless of whether it was direct/bilateral or indirect/unilateral, was rated unacceptable. Moreover, most people believe rape is more serious than and have more vivid images of rape than of an incident resulting in rape avoidance. So, when told the female victim was avoided rape, subjects may not have had enough information about the outcome to base their

evaluations on it. Instead, they based their evaluations on the actual characteristics of the behavior. The direct/bilateral power strategies were then evaluated more positively than the indirect/unilateral power strategies which is consistent with existing research.

Empathy and Responsibility Main Effects

Measures of empathy and responsibility were fairly straightforward. As expected, female subjects (M = 6.72) felt more empathy for the victim (male subjects M = 4.02), F (1,113) = 19.46, $p < .001$, and held the assailant more responsible (M =9.21) than male subjects (M = 8.28), F (1,113) = 9.60, $p < .01$. On the other hand, male subjects (M = 5.78) felt more empathy for the male assailant (female subjects M = 2.17), F (1,113) = 40.88, $p < .001$, and rated the female victim more responsible for the incident (male subjects M = 4.52, female subjects M = 3.46), F (1,113) = 5.11, $p < .05$. These measures clearly show that males put themselves in the place of the assailant and females put themselves in the place of the victim.

In addition, male and female subjects both felt more empathy for the male assailant when the female victim used indirect/unilateral power strategies (M = 4.58) than direct/bilateral power strategies (M = 3.33), F (1,113) = 5.28, $p < .05$. Moreover, both males and females agreed that if the victim failed to clearly signal her resistance by using indirect/unilateral strategies, then she was seen as at least partly responsible for the incident (indirect/unilateral power strategies M = 4.62, direct/bilateral power strategies M = 3.33), F (1,113) = 7.79, $p < .01$. This increase in responsibility attributed to the victim and in empathy attributed to the assailant when the victim uses

indirect/unilateral strategies may be a consequence of the fact that, in general, people believe that women who use indirect/unilateral strategies are not really expecting compliance (Falbo & Peplau, 1980). Therefore, people may believe a female victim who uses indirect/unilateral strategies is more responsible for her situation because she was not clearly resisting the assault. Because people think indirect/unilateral resistance is unclear, they may empathize more with the assailant because he made a valid misinterpretation of the victim's behavior.

3-Way Interaction on Empathy for the Assailant

Interestingly, empathy for the assailant was qualified by a three-way interaction,

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Insert Figure 4 about here

F (1,113) = 9.68, $p < .01$. When rape was avoided, male subjects empathized with the assailant more when the victim used indirect/unilateral strategies (M = 7.53), than when she used direct/bilateral strategies (M = 4.47). The victim's strategy was not important for female subjects (indirect/unilateral, M = 1.75; direct/bilateral, M = 1.80) when rape was avoided. When rape occurred, however, males appeared to distance themselves from the assailant regardless of the victim's strategy (direct/bilateral M = 6.00; indirect/unilateral M = 5.13). On the other hand, females felt some empathy for the assailant if the victim was raped using the traditional, indirect/unilateral, power strategies (M = 4.10; direct/bilateral M = 1.07), perhaps in an attempt to distance

themselves from the victim.

The decrease in male subjects' empathy for the assailant in all conditions except the indirect/unilateral power strategy avoidance situation and the increase in female subjects' empathy for the assailant in the indirect/unilateral rape situation may be defensive attributions (Shaver, 1970). However, the possibility that men empathize less with the assailant in order to distant themselves from the assailant and that women empathize more with the assailant in order to distant themselves from an unsuccessful victim is not really clear here and needs to be explored more in future research.

Sex X Power Strategy Interaction on Competence

There was also an interesting sex of subject by power strategy interaction on the measure of competence. Male subjects rated the strategies used by the victim as

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Insert Figure 5 about here

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equally competent (direct/bilateral M = 3.40; indirect/unilateral M = 3.60) whereas female subjects saw direct/bilateral strategies (M = 4.40) as more competent than indirect/unilateral strategies (M = 2.87), F (1,113) = 12.28, $p < .001$. Perhaps this occurred because female subjects based their rating of competence on the strategy used by the victim while male subjects may have based their rating on the sex of the victim. In other words, in accord with past research on power strategies, female

subjects rated direct/bilateral strategies as better and more competent than the indirect/unilateral strategies. The victim's sex was not very salient to the female subjects because it was their own. On the other hand, because competency is the primary factor differentiating the sex-role stereotypes of men and women (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972), for a rating of competency, the sex of the victim may have been more salient to the male subjects than the power strategies she used. Thus, the male subjects may have rated the victim's competency the same regardless of her power strategies because they were basing the rating on sex rather than power strategies.

Conclusions

Overall, the subjects' attributions seemed to be particularly affected by the type of strategy employed by the victim, the empathy the subjects felt for both the victim and the assailant, and the success of the strategy. Consistent with previous research, direct/bilateral strategies were rated more positively than indirect/unilateral strategies.

Furthermore, successful strategies were rated more highly than unsuccessful strategies. However, this effect was qualified by a number of outcome by strategy interactions. While subjects differentiated between the two types of successful strategies, hindsight bias seemed to prevent differentiation between the two types of unsuccessful strategies. These interactions point to a possible avenue for future research in the area power strategies. Outcome has not been manipulated in the past and, in the future, the success of the strategy should continue to be addressed

because it does influence evaluations.

In addition, empathy provided a particularly good explanation for the subjects' attributions of responsibility. Female subjects were more able to put themselves in the victim's place than the male subjects and this seemed to lead the female subjects to place more blame on the assailant and less blame on the victim than the male subjects. Moreover, the sex of the victim may have affected male subjects ratings of competence. However, this was very unclear and more research is needed for clarification.

Interestingly, gender inappropriate behavior (i.e., women using direct/bilateral strategies) was not negatively evaluated. Perhaps the stereotypes in society are changing and it is more usual and acceptable for women to utilize direct/bilateral strategies and these strategies are no longer considered gender inappropriate. This is good news considering the fact that direct/bilateral strategies are consistently rated more positively than indirect/unilateral strategies.

In general, the results of the study indicate that a victim's power strategy in resisting a male's attempts to initiate sex in a dating context is very important. In a date rape situation, women need to be explicit in their resistance if they are to avoid being held responsible for date rape and if they wish to reduce empathy with the assailant. Perhaps most importantly, males need to become more sensitive to indirect/unilateral expressions of resistance in order to avoid date rape.

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Author Notes

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Figure 1. Outcome x Power Strategy Interaction on Powerfullness

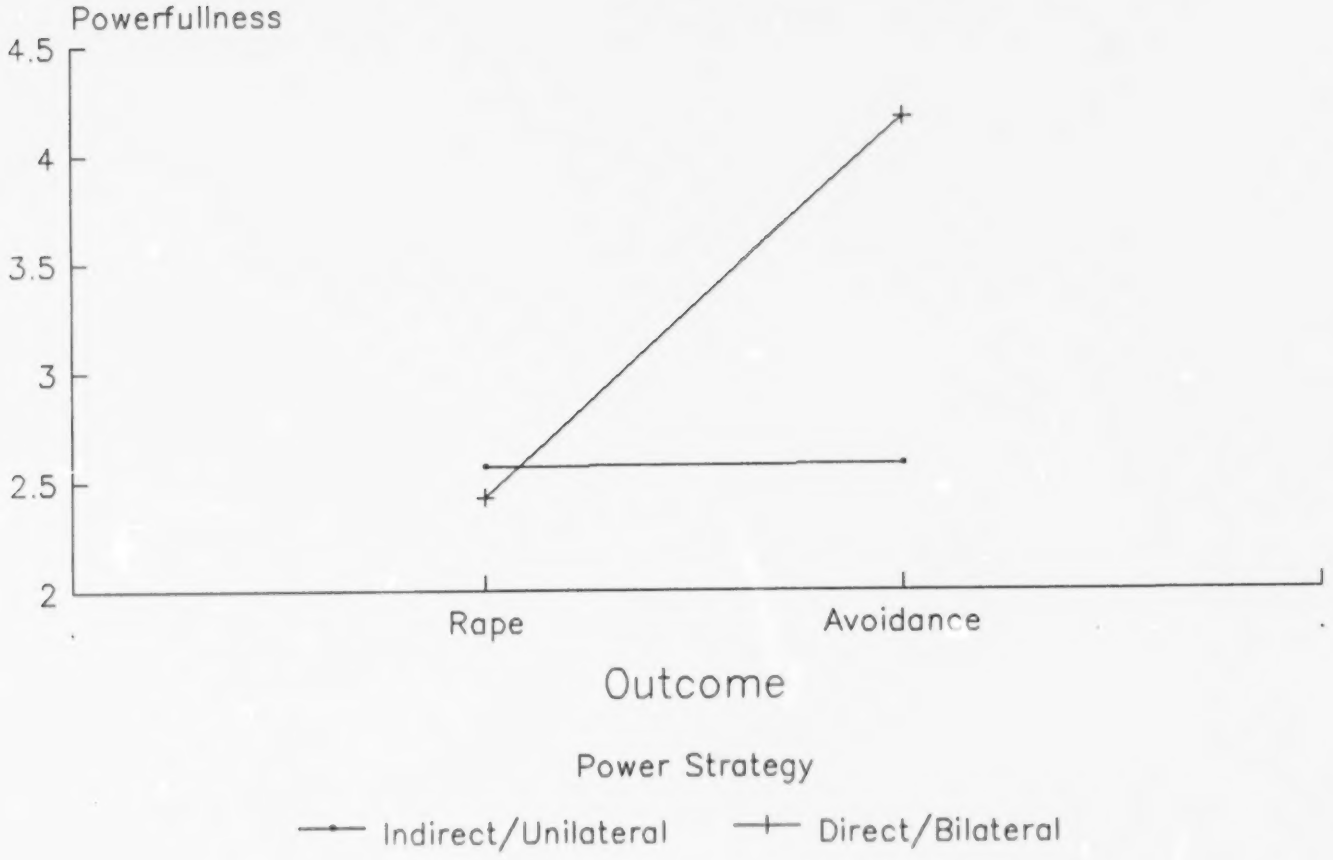

Figure 2. Outcome x Power Strategy Interaction on Competence

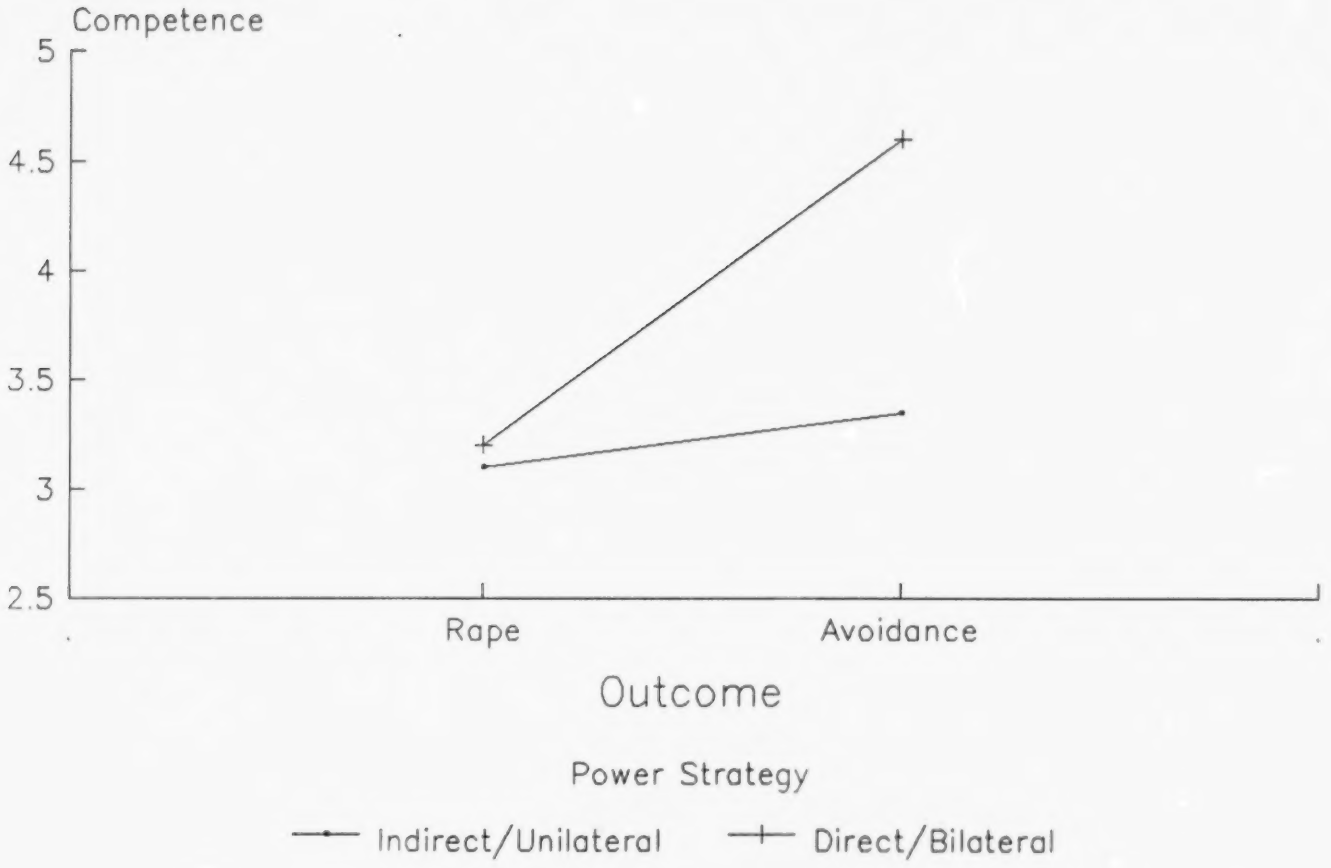

Figure 3. Outcome x Power Strategy Interaction on Straightforwardness

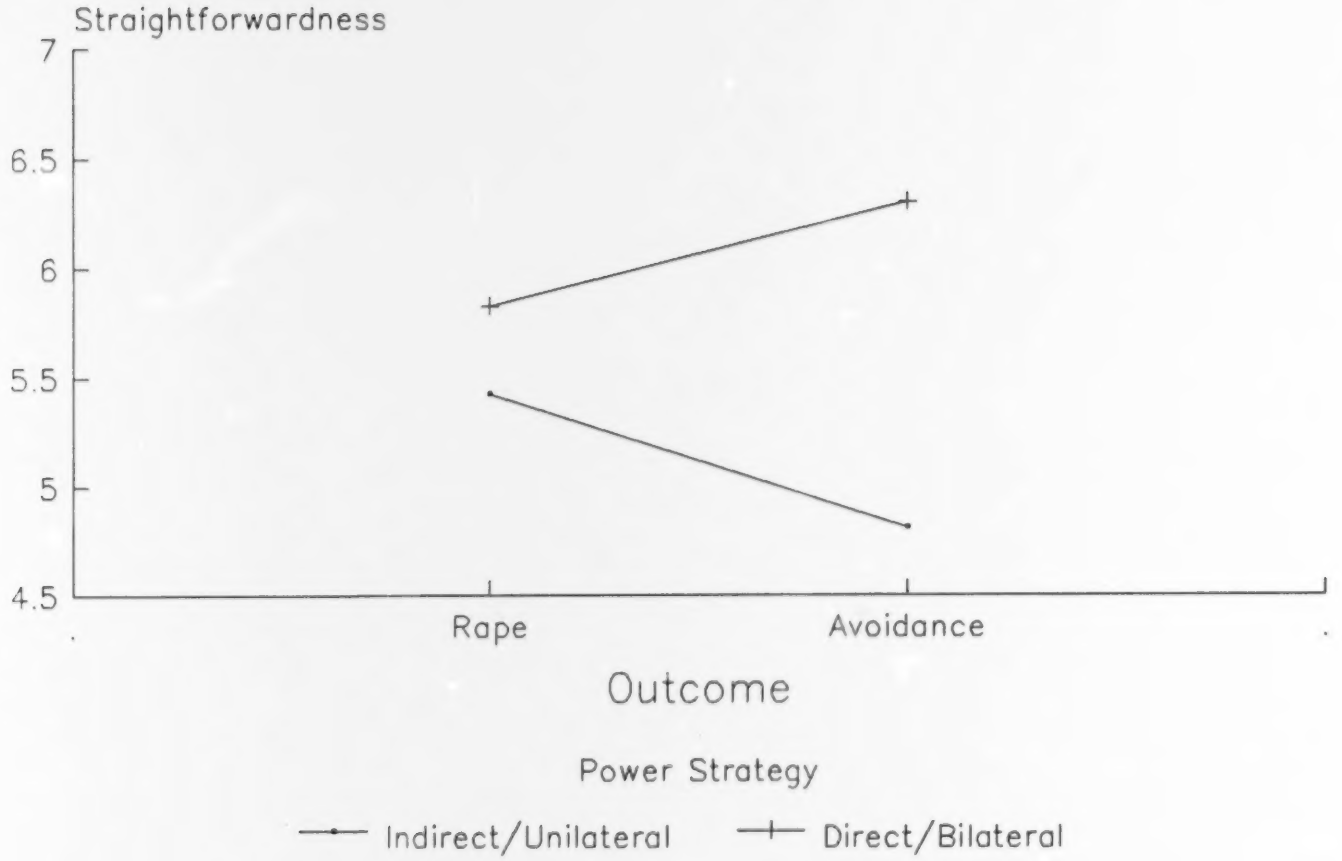

Figure 4. Outcome x Power Strategy x Sex of Subject Interaction on Empathy for the Assailant

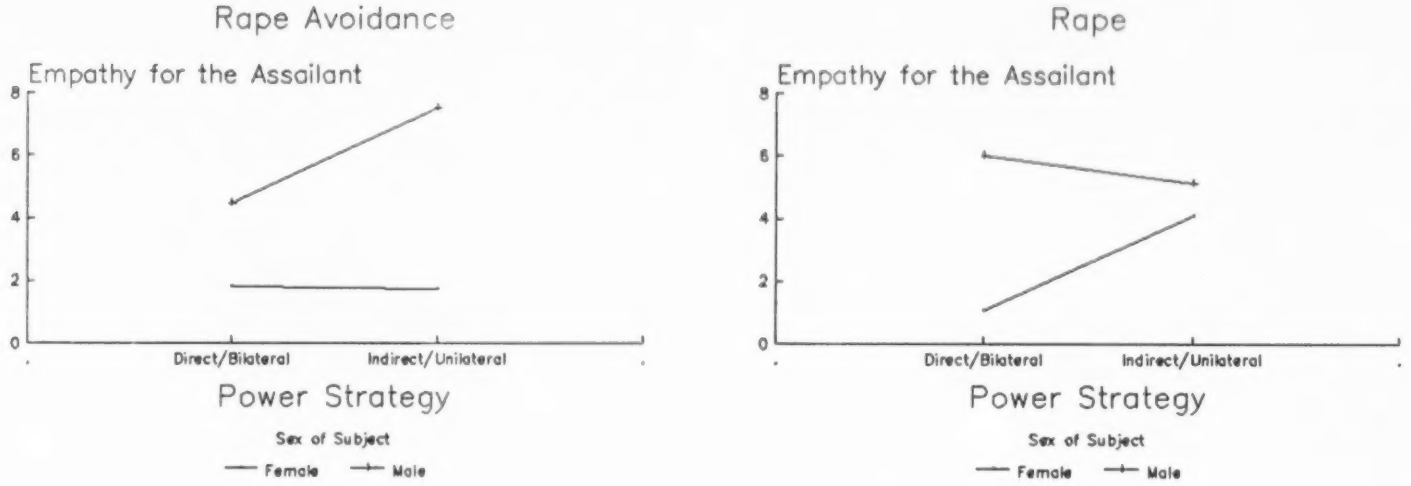

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Figure 5. Sex of Subject x Power Strategy Interaction on Competence